

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

# US Marine in Subic rape case acquitted

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romantic episode with both parties carried away by their passions and stirred up by the urgency of the moment caused probably by alcoholic drinks they took, only to be rudely interrupted when the van suddenly stopped to pick up some passengers," the court said.

During the marathon trial in 2006, Nicole claimed that Smith raped her at the back of a van in the evening of November 1, 2005, while three other US servicemen, cheered him on.

Nicole recanted the allegations in an affidavit dated March 8, saying she was too drunk to recall what happened. The court

said the recantation was not considered in its decision to acquit Smith.

The court said: "No evidence was introduced to show force, threat and intimidation applied by the accused upon Nicole even as prosecution vainly tried to highlight her supposed intoxication and alleged unconsciousness at the time of the sexual act."

Smith is detained at the US embassy in Manila. His acquittal, two years after his conviction at the Makati regional trial court, removes an irritant in the implementation of the Philippine-US Visiting Forces Agreement, months after US President Barack Obama called up President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to emphasize the importance of the VFA in the two countries' relations.

The VFA came under fire for its alleged lopsided provisions when the Philippine government surrendered custody of Smith to the US embassy even after his conviction, based on a provision in the VFA, which stated that the US embassy would retain custody of American servicemen pending all legal proceedings on any offenses they might have committed. ■

# No limit to the Filipino spirit

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Nevada, Utah, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey until she reaches New York City.

Joy is expected to arrive at the Philippine Consulate on Fifth Avenue on September 8. By then, she will have run an estimated 5000 kilometers in 120 days, 20 of which will be spent for resting.

"The goal is the same," said Joy at the launch of the Takbong Pangarap channel on www.thepoc.net. "It's to reach New York running. And I hope I'll still be in one piece after 5000 kilometers," she smiled.

Takbong Pangarap will also see Joy reuniting with her Hakbang Pangarap trainer and running partner Mateo Macabe, as well as team manager Chuck Crisanto.

Unlike in the Hakbang Pangarap, however, Mat will not be able to run with Joy the entire course after he underwent open-heart surgery in 2008, but he will be her pacer and navigator. He will also take turns manning the Takbong Pangarap support vehicle with Chuck. Mat is a story of resiliency in his own right.

Aside from pursuing her own dream, Joy will also share her endeavor with the Filipino people. During the course of 12 states, the Takbong Pangarap team will make contact with the different Filipino communities along the way.

Asked if her supporters in the US would be allowed to run side by side with her, Joy answered smiling "Definitely!" Chuck said this would help inspire others about the benefits of

living a healthy lifestyle.

Another goal of the dream run is to raise funds for two beneficiaries: the Anti-TB Program of the Inner Wheel Club of Quezon City District 378 and the Social Services Division of the Philippine Heart Center.

"So many people have helped us make our dream come true and now, it's our turn to make other people's dream come true," shared Joy.

**Realizing the dream**

Joy and the Takbong Pangarap team plan to accomplish all these goals through hard work and determination.

But realizing the dream run lies in the support of the people, too, whether through donating to the Takbong Pangarap fund or hosting the team while they pass through your area.

People can also be a 5K sponsor. By donating \$100, five kilometers of the run will be dedicated to Joy's supporters, as she will attach a running bib where their own aspirations will be written.

"Manny Pacquiao, he's a prize fighter. He's an athlete but there's a big prize waiting for him at the end of the fight," Chuck recounted, "Joy Rojas is not a prize runner. At the end of the road, it's just about accomplishing something."

Joy is known for pushing herself to greater distances and achieving higher goals with each endeavor.

"That's the reason that drives you and the passion that drives her as well," he said.

For more information on how to help the Takbong Pangarap team, visit www.thepoc.net. ■

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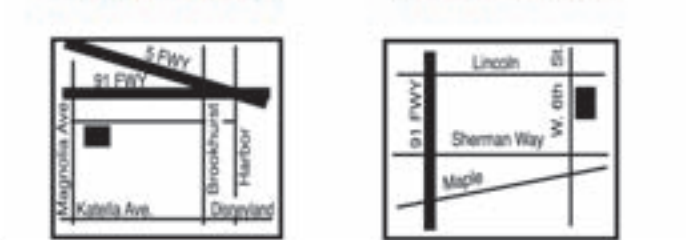


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# Green Philippine passports no longer valid by 2010

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entry faster since the information in the passport can be read by the machine and stored automatically in the database of immigration offices.

This is expected to make processing of travelers at ports of entry and exit faster.

"This means greater convenience and security for the traveler. In the past, the information is manually encoded in the database," the Los Angeles Philippine Consulate said in its website.

"With the MRP's superior security features compared to the green passports, it virtually eliminates the possibility of identity theft and acts of fraud," it added.

The Consul General in a

statement said that Filipinos who want to apply for a MRP during the consular outreach in Las Vegas need to make an appointment on or before May 20.

"(This is) in view of the anticipated high volume of applicants and in order to ensure an orderly flow of operations," it said.

"While walk in applicants will also be entertained, priority will be given to those with confirmed appointments," it added.

Appointments can be made via email at laphilcongen@gmail.com or fax 213-639-0990, while application forms can be downloaded from www.philippineconsulatela.org. Confirmed appointments will

be posted at this website as well.

MRP applicants also need to mail or fax advanced copies of application forms as well as a copy of the data page of their current passports. In addition, they need to submit three passport-sized photos with royal blue background, instead of white during the consular outreach. All applicants with confirmed appointments are required to complete the application in person.

MRP application fee is \$50 while mailing costs an additional \$6. It will take approximately six weeks to receive the new document

Meanwhile, the consular team will also offer other services

during the two-day outreach which will be held from 9am to 5pm at the Colonnade Square Plaza on 8826 S. Eastern Ave., Suite 115 Las Vegas, NV.

Other consular transactions include processing of applications for retention and re-acquisition of Philippine citizenship; notarization of documents; and registration for overseas absentee voting.

Filipinos who want to avail of these additional services during the Consular outreach should also send advanced copies of application forms to the Los Angeles Consular office via fax or e-mail. They need to as set up appointments before May 20 via fax or e-mail as well. (Dymphna Calica-La Putt)

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